

## INTRODUCTION TO THE

**California Air Resources Board***California's Clean Air Agency*

California's Legislature established the Air Resources Board (ARB) in 1967 to:

- Attain and maintain healthy air quality.
- Conduct research to determine the causes of and solutions to air pollution.
- Systematically attack the serious problem caused by motor vehicles, which is the major cause of air pollution in the state.

Since its formation, the ARB has worked with the public, the business sector and local governments to protect the public's health, the economy and the state's ecological resources through the most cost-effective reduction of air pollution.

**The Governing Board**

The Air Resources Board's 11 members are appointed by the Governor. Five are experts in fields such as medicine, chemistry, physics, meteorology, engineering, business and law. Five others are elected officials who represent regional air pollution control agencies - one each from Los Angeles region, San Francisco Bay area, San Diego and the San Joaquin Valley with one representing the other districts. The chairman is the only full-time member.

**The Staff**

Under the direction of the executive officer, a dedicated staff of scientists, engineers, and other professionals conduct the daily work of the ARB. With headquarters in Sacramento, the ARB also operates a motor vehicle testing and analysis laboratory in El Monte.

**The Air Is Cleaner**

California's air pollution control program is one of the most effective in the world. Coordinated state, regional and local efforts have steadily improved our air quality and as a result, the state's air is the cleanest in years.

For example, in the Los Angeles area - the most seriously polluted region in the nation - the highest levels of pollution have dropped by 25 percent since 1980. Annual exposure to smog has decreased by 50 percent.

**But Pollution is Still a Problem**

Despite these improvements, California continues to face the nation's greatest air quality challenge. The state's sunny climate, pollution-trapping mountains and valleys, along with the activities of 35 million Californians all contribute to the problem. Every year more than 90 percent of all Californians breathe unhealthy, polluted air. This harms our health and the economy.

**Air Pollution Harms Our Health**

Health problems linked to air pollution range from eye irritation, sore throats and coughing to lung damage, cancer and premature death. Those with heart or lung disease or problems such as asthma can be severely impaired. Healthy children and adults who play or exercise vigorously are also at risk.

**Air Pollution Also Harms the Economy**

Every year, Californians lose billions of dollars due to air pollution. The cost of health-related problems, plus damage to crops, forests and wild vegetation, all add up to a big drain on California's economy.

## **What the ARB Does**

Programs for cleaner air range from research and regulation to enforcement and education. The ARB:

- Establishes and enforces emission standards for motor vehicles, fuels and consumer products.
- Has new authority to control climate change emissions.
- Establishes health-based air quality standards.
- Conducts research.
- Monitors air quality.
- Identifies and establishes control measures for toxic air contaminants.
- Provides compliance assistance for businesses.
- Produces education and outreach programs and materials.
- Oversees and assists local air quality districts which regulate most non-vehicular sources of air pollution.

## **Solutions for Cleaner Air**

California has reduced air pollution through:

- Car and truck emission standards that dramatically reduce pollution. Today's new cars pollute about 90 percent less than cars in the early 1970's.
- A zero-emission vehicle program that spurs the production of cars and trucks with no direct air pollution emissions.
- Cleaner-burning fuels that cut pollution from all gasoline and diesel vehicles and equipment. Cleaner-burning gasoline cuts smog-forming pollution by 15 percent and cancer risk from gasoline by 30 percent.
- Consumer products regulations that reduce smog-forming emissions by about 60 tons a day by 1999.
- Air toxics control measures that apply to over 7000 businesses and to all motor vehicles that are up to 100 percent effective for the most significant air toxics.
- Training and literature that help businesses understand and comply with air pollution rules.
- Educational programs that increase the environmental awareness of businesses and the general public.

## **Looking Forward**

The air is cleaner, but not clean enough. In 1994, the ARB adopted the State Implementation Plan, a detailed plan to clean up air pollution in the next 5 to 15 years. That seems like a long time, but areas like Los Angeles must reduce smog-forming air pollution emissions by 70 percent. In addition, the ARB is now a lead state agency in California's effort to reduce greenhouse gases.

Even then, cleaning up the air will take more than government regulations. It will hinge on how companies conduct their business and how individuals live their lives.

## **For More Information**

For more information please contact 800-242-4450 or visit us on the web at [www.arb.ca.gov](http://www.arb.ca.gov). To obtain this information in an alternative format please contact the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Office at (916) 323-7053.